

SOIL AND WATER Resources

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All Life Depends on the Soil

by Sara Parker Pauley -
Director, Missouri Department
of Natural Resources

"Essentially, all life depends upon the soil ... There can be no life without soil and no soil without life; they have evolved together," said Dr. Charles E. Kellogg, soil scientist and former chief of the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Bureau of Chemistry and Soils. Dr. Kellogg's legacy of bringing awareness to the importance of soil data was built around his belief that soil is the foundation of life.

Healthy soil provides us with clean air and water, productive crops and grazing fields, diverse wildlife and beautiful rural sceneries. It's a quality of life we all cherish and one we have come to expect. However, our soil quality has not always been healthy. In fact, Missouri once held the second highest rate of erosion in the nation. Soil once used as productive agriculture land has polluted our waterways.

In order to reduce soil erosion, improve water quality as well as support Missouri state parks, Missouri voters passed a one-tenth-of-one-percent sales tax in 1984, now called the Parks, Soils and Water Sales Tax. Missourians have continued to show their support for these efforts by renewing the tax in 1988, 1996 and 2006. The tax is set to expire in 2016 unless renewed.

The Missouri Department of Natural Resources has administered funds generated from the tax through county soil and water districts to Missouri landowners to implement voluntary practices that have kept more than 177 million tons of soil from eroding into our waterways. The department through local, state and federal partnerships promotes good farming techniques that keep soil on our fields and our waters clean while conserving the productivity of Missouri's 97,000 farms.



A rainbow arches over a corn field at Tom Bradley's farm in southeast Missouri. MoDNR photo by Van Beydler

While these efforts have drastically improved our soil and water quality, it's no longer enough due to increased population and food production demands. With help from our partners, the department will increase the amount of soil data collected through the state's premier Soil Health Assessment Center at the University of Missouri-Columbia. Agricultural landowners will submit soil samples for analysis that will provide the state with a new baseline for soil health and help determine which voluntary practices are improving the quality and productivity of our soil the most. I believe Dr. Kellogg would be proud of Missouri's efforts. Learn more at dnr.mo.gov.

This article was previously published as the *Director's Comment* in the Winter 2016 issue of *Missouri Resources*.

Legislators Meet with Soil and Water District Constituents at February Educational Seminar

Several state legislators met with their local soil and water district constituents at the Missouri Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts Educational Seminar held Feb. 18, 2016.



(l to r) Brad Powell, Rep. Patricia Pike and Doug Cox
Photo submitted

The objective of the seminar was for districts to get to know the members of the Missouri General Assembly and inform them about the important and effective job districts do using the Parks, Soils and Water Sales Tax funds through the Soil and Water Conservation Program. The educational seminar provides legislators with a venue to hear the priorities and challenges of soil and water conservation.

Soil Health Assessment Center Continues to Develop Soil Health Database

The Soil Health Assessment Center (SHAC) is continuing to process and analyze samples submitted for the cover crop practice. The Soil Health Assessment Center is continuing to build a database that will eventually be used for developing analysis reports for landowners. Submitting samples is a requirement of the cover crop practice.

Based on the component utilization report in MoSWIMS there are more than 1,870 samples that have been sent to SHAC for the cover crop practice since July 2015 from districts offering the cover crop practice.

NRCS Announces Sign-Up Deadline of April 25 for Water Quality Initiative in Missouri

The USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) announced that landowners have until April 15 to request assistance through the National Water Quality Initiative (NWQI) to improve water quality in three Missouri watersheds.

For more information about NRCS' programs, initiatives and services in Missouri, visit bit.ly/1QLLRxg on the Web.



(l to r) Joe Reser, Rep. Warren Love, Jim Freeburger, Tina Dulaban, Rep. Wanda Brown and Jamie Henderson.

Photo submitted

Missouri Soil and Water Conservation Program receives The National Wild Turkey Federation's "Save the Habitat" Award

The National Wild Turkey Federation recently announced the Missouri Soil and Water Program was recently presented the National Wild Turkey Federation's "Save the Habitat" award for its efforts to help private landowners conserve soil and water.

"Since Missouri, is considered a private land state at more than 93 percent, land management equipment is often a limiting factor to high quality habitat restoration and maintenance," said John Burk, Regional Biologist for Missouri and Illinois with the National Wild Turkey Federation. "Over the years, the Soil and Water Conservation Districts have contributed tens of thousands of matching dollars, provided technical assistance, and administered and maintained the equipment that landowners depend upon and that is improving habitat on private lands across our state."

The Soil and Water Conservation Program is guided by the Soil and Water Districts Commission whose primary responsibility is the determination of policies and procedures to be used by soil and water conservation districts. A soil and water conservation district is located in each of Missouri's 114 counties. District programs use technical, financial and information services to help local landowners and farmers put in place soil and water conservation practices. Each district has a wide variety of resources for landowners, including cost-sharing programs and technical assistance.

For more information about the Soil and Water Conservation Program, contact your local district or visit dnr.mo.gov/env/swcp/index.html.



Soil and Water Conservation Program deputy director Bill Wilson (l) and director Colleen Meredith (r) accept the National Wild Turkey Federation Save the Habitat award on behalf of the soil and water conservation districts and the Soil and Water Districts Commission.

National Wild Turkey Federation photo

Missouri to Hold 18th Annual Envirothon on April 28 in Jefferson City

Students from approximately 21 high schools across Missouri will pit their knowledge of natural resources and the environment against one another during the 18th annual Missouri Envirothon to be held on Thursday, April 28, 2016 in Jefferson City.

More information about the Missouri Envirothon is available at moenvirothon.org.

Colleen Meredith Recognized as Conservationist of the Year by the Missouri Show-Me Chapter of the Soil and Water Conservation Society

Colleen Meredith, director of the Soil and Water Conservation Program within the Missouri Department of Natural Resources, has been recognized as the Conservationist of the Year by the Missouri Show-Me Chapter of the Soil and Water Conservation Society. The award was presented on Feb. 4 in conjunction with the Natural Resources Conference held at the Lake of the Ozarks.

The award was based upon accomplishments throughout her tenure with the Soil and Water Conservation Program focused on partner projects, her daily outstanding effort, and dedication to our natural resources.

Diane Bradley-Redden nominated Colleen. In acceptance of the award, Colleen thanked the Society and said her time as a member and officer provided leadership skills and encouraged others to be active members. She also attributed her success to the work of the soil and water conservation districts, Soil and Water Program staff and partner agencies.



Diane Bradley-Redden (l), NRCS Harrisonville, presents a plaque to Soil and Water Conservation Program director Colleen Meredith (r).

Photo submitted



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